

IMESS DISSERTATION



Note: Please email the completed mark sheet to Year 2 coordinator
(cc Julia Korosteleva j.korosteleva@ucl.ac.uk and Marta Kotwas m.kotwas@ucl.ac.uk)

Please note that IMESS students are not required to use a particular set of methods (e.g. qualitative, quantitative, or comparative) in their dissertation.

Student:	Meng Zhou
Dissertation title:	'Memory of Communism and Post-Communism in Czech Republic, Through the Eyes of Younger Generation—A Case Study'

	Excellent	Satisfactory	Poor
Knowledge <i>Knowledge of problems involved, e.g. historical and social context, specialist literature on the topic. Evidence of capacity to gather information through a wide and appropriate range of reading, and to digest and process knowledge.</i>		X	
Analysis & Interpretation <i>Demonstrates a clear grasp of concepts. Application of appropriate methodology and understanding; willingness to apply an independent approach or interpretation recognition of alternative interpretations; Use of precise terminology and avoidance of ambiguity; avoidance of excessive generalisations or gross oversimplifications.</i>		X	
Structure & Argument <i>Demonstrates ability to structure work with clarity, relevance and coherence. Ability to argue a case; clear evidence of analysis and logical thought; recognition of an arguments limitation or alternative views; Ability to use other evidence to support arguments and structure appropriately.</i>		X	
Presentation & Documentation <i>Accurate and consistently presented footnotes and bibliographic references; accuracy of grammar and spelling; correct and clear presentation of charts/graphs/tables or other data. Appropriate and correct referencing throughout. Correct and contextually correct handling of quotations.</i>		X	

ECTS Mark:		UCL Mark:	56	Marker:	P. Zusi
<i>Deducted for late submission:</i>				Signed:	
<i>Deducted for inadequate referencing:</i>				Date:	16/6/15

MARKING GUIDELINES

A (UCL mark 70+): Note: marks of over 80 are given rarely and only for truly exceptional pieces of work.

Distinctively sophisticated and focused analysis, critical use of sources and insightful interpretation. Comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to the chosen field of research, showing an ability to engage in sustained independent research.

B/C (UCL mark 60-69):

A high level of analysis, critical use of sources and insightful interpretation. Good understanding of techniques applicable to the chosen field of research, showing an ability to engage in sustained independent research. 65 or over equates to a B grade.

D/E (UCL mark 50-59):

Demonstration of a critical use of sources and ability to engage in systematic inquiry. An ability to engage in sustained research work, demonstrating methodological awareness. 55 or over equates to a D grade.

F (UCL mark less than 50):

Demonstrates failure to use sources and an inadequate ability to engage in systematic inquiry. Inadequate evidence of ability to engage in sustained research work and poor understanding of appropriate research techniques.

**CONTINUES OVERLEAF
PLEASE PROVIDE SUBSTANTIVE AND
DETAILED FEEDBACK!**

Constructive comments, explaining strengths and weaknesses (at least 300 words):

This is an honest if unambitious dissertation, taking the results of interviews, presenting them clearly though straightforwardly, and attempting to frame them in a theoretical discussion of memory studies and legacies of the period of socialism. The initial overview of secondary literature on memory studies is done well enough as far as it goes, and presents some major conceptual distinctions—such as collective memory versus collective remembrance, collective versus individual memory, or direct versus ‘second-hand’ memory—which then operate within the dissertation itself (although the links could be elaborated further). There is one very significant absence in the secondary literature discussed, however, and that is Marianne Hirsch’s highly influential work on ‘postmemory’ in second- and third-generation Holocaust families. This is a major problem because this work well known and is *directly* relevant to the present dissertation, as it also focuses on how memories linger even among later generations that did not directly experience the events under discussion. Further, given the results of the present dissertation—specifically, that while *collective memory* of the socialist period in the CR is distinctly and sharply negative, *individual remembrance* among the generations that did not experience the period directly is significantly more nuanced, if not to say balanced—one might ask what sort of contrast could be drawn between postmemory of the Holocaust and postmemory of state socialism, and whether both are to be understood as communal traumas of comparable nature. Such consideration might have added a further dimension to the conclusion of the dissertation, which at present remains very descriptive and does not explore the implications of the findings in enough detail. Further, there is significant imbalance in the discussion of communism and post-communism: currently the latter gets significantly shorter treatment than the former, and they are treated as ‘chapters’ of a similar development. Yet, as the dissertation makes clear, we are dealing here with *indirect* memory (postmemory) of the communist period, and *direct* memory of the post-communist period. The initial discussion of memory theory has made clear that these two phenomena are distinct and cannot be elided, yet the dissertation does precisely this.

The author shows some awareness of the natural limitations of the methodology she has chosen, and explains how the subjects for interviews were selected and how this selection might bias the results of the research. She shows awareness of the intricacies and dynamics of the interviewing process (such as when she points out that her being a Chinese citizen could potentially influence the interviewees’ willingness to speak critically about Communism). These acknowledgements are welcome, but do not dispel the impression that this sampling of interviews has a significantly random shape. The dissertation has frequent typographical errors and awkward or unclear modes of expression.

Specific questions you would like addressing at the oral defence (at least 2 questions):

Would you say that, for your interviewees, memory of the post-communist period of the 1990s is more homogenous (or less nuanced) than their ‘postmemory’ of the communist period? If so, how might you explain this?

As you discuss in your dissertation, the ‘common memory project’ of the EU has placed memory of communism together with memory of the Holocaust as comparable components of a unified ‘anti-totalitarian’ European memory. Would you say that your research shows the postmemory of communism to be more similar to or different from the postmemory of the Holocaust?